



# LESSON SIX: TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THE TREE

## A MOCK CITY COUNCIL MEETING

### OVERVIEW

The students will learn about the public process and understand that citizens can and should participate in the process.

### OBJECTIVE

The students will learn that:

- Many things go into each of the hundreds of decisions the City Council makes each year.
- The Council relies on staff input and experts on a subject.
- The Council takes advice from appropriate volunteer advisory groups.
- Decorum and protocol must be followed.
- The Council courteously listens to and carefully considers public opinion – particularly the needs and wants of people who may be affected by the decision.
- Sometimes Council members check things out in person, so they can be sure they are making the right decision.
- People can legitimately disagree in a cordial manner. Just because someone's opinion is different doesn't make it wrong.
- Whatever decision is reached – and whether that decision is unanimous or not – each Council member votes based upon what he/she sincerely believes is the right thing to do for Carlsbad.

### CONCEPTS

Democracy  
Rules of Meetings  
Agreeing and Disagreeing

### SKILLS

Decision-making  
Following a script  
Public speaking

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### PREPARATION

Before this class, tell the students that the City Council generally holds a public meeting on the first four Tuesdays of each month starting at 6 pm in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. Explain what goes on at a typical meeting. Encourage them to watch a meeting on TV, channel 3. *(Tell them they are also allowed/invited to observe a meeting in person, if their parents so choose.)* You may hint that soon they will be participating in their own “mock” council meeting.

Lead students in singing all or part of the Carlsbad Rap. Focus particularly on the fifth and final verse. Explain that soon they will be acting out this very verse!

Tell Marilyn Campbell (well in advance) the day and time of the class, so she can solicit the presence of a Council member or other City official to appear, speak to the students and help hand out certificates. If you are holding the meeting at Council Chambers, confirm this also.

***Note: We encourage you to hold your Mock Council Meeting in City Council Chambers. Please see the insert: “Mock Council Meeting in City Council Chambers” sheet.***

### VOCABULARY

**Agenda Bill:** a request from City staff for the City Council to take action on an issue.

**Staff:** another word for employees.

**Parks and Recreation Commission:** a group of citizens appointed by the City Council, The commissioners study subjects that have to do with City parks and recreational issues, then give the City Council advice.

**Certified Arborist:** a specialist who knows all about trees.

### TIME

60 minutes

(Remember to keep things moving along as you will need to save time for a guest appearance and the handing out of certificates.)

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### MATERIALS

Script for each student/cast member plus 1 each for volunteer and teacher  
Agenda Bill  
2 “Request to Speak” forms – one for each family  
Photos and names of City Council members and City Manager  
Photo of “The Tree”  
Lopez Family sign: **SAVE THE TREE**  
Johnson Family sign: **CUT DOWN THE TREE**  
Name tags for each actor (optional – not included)  
Graduation certificates (insert names prior to this activity)

### CAST

Everyone in class will play a role. The cast is predicated on a 20-student class. For larger classes, we have written in parts for additional Lopez and Johnson family members to use at your discretion.

5 City Council Members: Mayor; Council Members #1, #2, #3, #4  
City Attorney  
City Clerk  
City Manager  
Parks Department Supervisor Staff  
Parks Department Certified Arborist  
Parks and Recreation Commission Chairperson  
4 or more Lopez Family Members – who want the tree to stay  
5 or more Johnson Family Members – who want the tree removed

### PRESENTATION

Explain to the students that today is the final class. To wrap up everything they have learned, they are going to participate in a “mock” City Council meeting. Tell them that everyone will have a role to play.

If you have attended/observed City Council meetings (and we hope you have!), describe what they are like. Explain that rules of procedure and decorum are followed, and that people have a chance to speak their mind. Tell them the City Council members want to have as much information and input as possible so they can make the best decision for the City and citizens. Explain that each Council member gets one vote and that the majority rules.

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Before describing the issue and assigning roles, it would be helpful to introduce the underlying concept of decision-making. [Don't spend too much time on this or let the kids get carried away. Just make sure they understand that reasonable people often agree, but can disagree as well.]

**Note:** *You may want to do this preview at the end of Lesson Five.*

### **Here is one suggested way:**

Some decisions are easy to make. Should you wear a helmet when riding your bike? [Yes!] Is it ok to litter? [No!] Are fruits and vegetables better for your health than doughnuts and soda pop? [Yes!] If someone asks you to go with them when they steal candy from a store, should you go? [No!] Ask the class for some other examples of easy decisions.

Some decisions are not as easy to make. Let's say your class is going to have a picnic. Should you make hamburgers or hot dogs? Some people might say hot dogs, because they're quick and easy to cook on a grill. But other people might say, hamburgers taste better. The hot dog group might respond that hot dogs are cheaper. That's true, say the hamburger people, but hamburgers are more filling so you would only eat one of them instead of two hot dogs.

The best way to resolve an issue like this is to get as much information as you can, discuss it, ask people for their opinions and then take a vote. If the majority of your class wants hot dogs, that's what you'll have. If a majority chooses hamburgers, you'll have hamburgers.

Explain to the students that the City Council has to make hundreds of decisions every year. Most of the decisions are complicated, so Council members rely on research, listen to people who will be affected by the decision and discuss the issues before voting.

**Note:** Volunteers should remember (and the teacher, students and any guests should be told) that this meeting is NOT a performance. It is a learning exercise.

**Note:** The City Council Members, City Manager, City Attorney and City Clerk sit in assigned spots on the dais. The Parks Supervisor, Parks and Recreation Commission Chairperson and Staff Arborist sit at the table facing the Council. The Lopez and Johnson families sit in the audience until it is their turn to speak, when they then approach the podium.